

Name _____ Date _____

Dealing With Cyberbullying

Sondra is planning a slumber party to celebrate her birthday. Her parents have set a limit of eight girls, so Sondra can't invite everyone she'd like. Two girls who are left out overhear the plans. Angry, they plan their revenge.

The girls make a "We Hate Sondra Jones" Web site. They say that anyone invited to the party should not go. They tell everyone in school the site's address. The girls invite everyone to add new reasons why they hate Sondra and to spread ugly rumors about her.

When Sondra hears about the site, she gets a sick feeling in her stomach. Unable to ignore it, she checks the site often. Each day she finds a new nasty comment or joke about her. She feels hurt and powerless to defend herself. Sondra is too embarrassed to go to school and tells her parents she is sick.

If you were Sondra's friend, what advice would you give her?

For the tenth day in a row, **Andrew** opens an e-mail that says, "I'm getting closer." He doesn't recognize the sender's address. He wonders if someone at school is trying to scare him. On the other hand, it could be a stranger. Whatever the source, Andrew is scared. The next afternoon, Andrew is home alone. The e-mails come every few minutes. "I'm hiding in your house using a wireless Internet connection. You'll never find me. But I'll find you."

Frozen with fear, Andrew can't think what to do. If he called you for advice, what would you tell him?

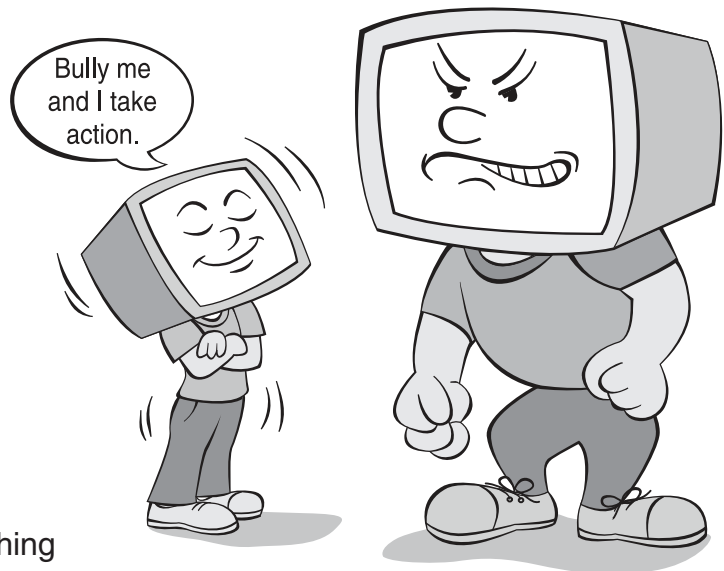
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Feeling Uncomfortable

While going into cyberspace can be fun, some online experiences may make you feel embarrassed, upset, depressed, or afraid. It can happen to anyone—even when going into cyberspace sitting comfortably inside your own home or favorite library. When it happens, it's best to take action.

Recognizing Cyberbullying

Both Sondra and Andrew are the targets of *cyberbullying*. Whether bullies are face to face or in cyberspace, they feel powerful when they bother other people. They may use hurtful words or threaten. Often the cyberbully is someone you know face to face. Perhaps the bully finds it easier to be mean and nasty online, when he or she can't see the other person's reaction. Online or off, bullying is meant to make you feel uncomfortable. Either way, it's upsetting.



Taking Action

Bullying should not be tolerated, whether in school or in cyberspace. Trust your uncomfortable feelings—they mean something is wrong. Here is what to do about it.

- Sign off the computer.
- Leave the chat room or Web site.
- Block the bully's messages.
- Save and print the bully's e-mails or your message logs.
- Never reply to a bully.
- Talk over how to handle the situation with a friend.
- Report your experience to a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult.

Be Cyber**Smart!**[®]

If you witness cyberbullying, you can help by supporting the target and letting the bullies know that their behavior is not acceptable.